



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

Department of Health

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Dear Party Interested in Oral Rabies Vaccine:

Thank you for your inquiry about the use of oral rabies vaccine for the control of wildlife rabies. At present, RABORAL-V-RG is the only oral rabies vaccine licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for use in this country. The license limits distribution of the vaccine to authorized recipients designated by proper state officials and under such additional conditions as these authorities may require. The vaccine is restricted to use in State or Federal Rabies Control Programs that target raccoons, gray foxes, and coyotes. This means that individuals, even licensed veterinarians, cannot purchase the vaccine unless authorized by appropriate state officials.

In 1997, a Virginia Interagency Oral Rabies Vaccine Committee was formed. The core members are representatives from the three state agencies with an interest in rabies control (the Departments of Health, Game and Inland Fisheries, and Agriculture and Consumer Services) and a District Health Director. The committee members agreed to utilize specialists in such fields as ecology, animal control, virology, immunology, or wildlife management as consultants as needed. There was consensus among the committee members that there has to be unanimous agreement from all three agencies on any proposal to use oral rabies vaccine in Virginia. Additionally, such a proposal would also have to meet with the approval of the District Health Director(s) from the jurisdictions in which the vaccine would be used. Because the use of oral vaccine in an area would involve a variety of local resources and require the cooperation of local governmental agencies, the committee members agreed to consider only those requests to use oral rabies vaccine that come from local, state, or federal governments. Requests from individuals or private organizations will be returned with the stipulation that they be submitted under the auspices of the appropriate local governing body.

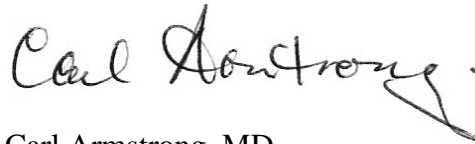
Because the most appropriate and cost-effective strategies for the use of oral rabies vaccine, particularly in an area like Virginia where rabies is well established, have not been determined and because any such undertaking will require considerable resources, the Committee will require that any request to use oral rabies vaccine be accompanied by a well-thought out proposal. The proposal should address technical, public relations, and funding issues and should also include methods for evaluating the outcome of using the oral rabies vaccine in the proposed area (see attachment). Unfortunately, limited state resources preclude the planning and staffing

of an oral rabies vaccine campaign at the state level, but the committee will consider any reasonable proposal that provides for funding and the hiring of appropriate staff.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services has a National Rabies Management Program that targets the control of rabies in raccoons, coyotes and gray foxes in many states in the US. Since 2001 a portion of southwest Virginia has been included in a large oral vaccination program designed to block the westward spread of raccoon rabies. For more detailed information go to: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies>.

Thank you for your interest in rabies control. If we can be of further help, please let one of us know.

Sincerely,



Carl Armstrong, MD
Director, Office of Epidemiology
Virginia Department of Health



Julia Murphy, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVPM
State Public Health Veterinarian
Virginia Department of Health



Richard Wilkes, DVM
State Veterinarian
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services



Jonathan Sleeman, MA, VetMB, Dipl. ACZM, MRCVS
Wildlife Veterinarian
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Attachment

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN ORAL RABIES VACCINE PROPOSAL

BACKGROUND

History of rabies in area

Habitat description

Estimates of human and companion animal populations

Description of community and political groups with an interest in rabies control

Rationale for use of oral rabies vaccine in this situation including expected outcome

PRE-BAITING EVALUATION

Population studies/estimates of target species

Background levels of biomarker in target and non-target species

Background levels of rabies antibodies in target and non-target species

VACCINE PACKAGE

Description of bait and rationale for use

Description of attractant and rationale for use

Description of biomarker(s) and rationale for use

Label description

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Mode: (airplane, helicopter, vehicle, or foot) with rationale

Density (even distribution or targeted) with rationale

Timing (time of year, frequency) with rationale

Duration - estimate of number of years needed to continue

Contingency plans if a rabid animal is identified in the baited area

POST-BAITING EVALUATION

Biomarker levels in target and non-target species

Antibody levels in target and non-target species

Rate of bait disappearance or disturbance

STAFFING

Appropriate training, selection and monitoring of staff

Significant professional oversight by a veterinarian and wildlife biologist

COOPERATION WITH FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

US Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services

Virginia Department of Health

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Animal Control officials

Law Enforcement officials

PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN

How public will be notified

Who will handle calls from public

SAFETY

Notification and education of human and animal medical community

Recommendations for humans and animals exposed to vaccine

Special recommendations for immunocompromised persons exposed to vaccine

BUDGET

Costs

Sources of funding

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL BY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY